

*The United Nations has described the situation in northern Sri Lanka as a 'bloodbath' after reports of heavy civilian casualties in artillery at the weekend. Charles Haviland reports from Colombo:*

The UN's **spokesman** here, Gordon Weiss, told the BBC that more than 100 children died during what he called the large-scale killing of **civilians** over the weekend. He said the UN had 'warned against the **bloodbath** and the weekend's events showed that 'that bloodbath has become a reality'.

A doctor working in the war zone said on Sunday that the bodies of 378 people had been registered at his hospital and that many other **corpses** were lying outside. He said **heavy arms** appeared to have been fired from **government-run territory** into a mainly civilian area under Tamil Tiger rebel control. But the government said the Tigers had done the firing. The issue of **civilian casualties** is highly sensitive here and the state-owned Daily News on Monday makes no mention of the incident at all.

In New York the British Foreign Secretary David Miliband is to **co-sponsor** informal discussions with ministers and charities on the island's **humanitarian** situation. The Sri Lankan government is **dismissive** of calls from him and other **diplomats** for a **ceasefire** in the north. It says it's about to defeat the rebels permanently and that a **ceasefire** would not help civilians.

Charles Haviland, BBC News, Colombo

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>spokesman</b>	someone (male or female) who is chosen by an organisation to speak officially to the public for it
<b>civilians</b>	people who are not members of the police or armed forces
<b>bloodbath scenario</b>	an extremely violent event in which a great number of people are killed
<b>corpses</b>	people's dead bodies
<b>heavy arms</b>	large weapons and equipment used to kill and injure people
<b>government-run territory</b>	land or area controlled by the government or state
<b>civilian casualties</b>	people injured or killed in an act of violence or an accident
<b>co-sponsor</b>	support by giving encouragement, time or money - along with somebody else
<b>humanitarian</b>	connected with improving people's lives and reducing suffering
<b>dismissive</b>	deciding that something or someone is not important and not worth considering
<b>diplomats</b>	people whose job is to officially represent one country while being in another
<b>ceasefire</b>	agreement to stop fighting to allow discussions about peace to happen

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